



Mecklenburg County

Economic Development Framework



Mecklenburg County
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Economic Development Focus Areas



New & Existing Business Growth



Small Business & Entrepreneurial Growth



Strong Communities & Neighborhoods



Workforce Development



Tourism, Arts and Culture

Mecklenburg County strives to provide economic opportunity for all its residents.

This policy guides programs and decision making to ensure a thriving economy open to all.

Mecklenburg County enjoys a robust and growing economy that is one of the strongest in the nation. It has accomplished this through partnerships with key organizations such as the Charlotte Business Alliance, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, Center City Partners and the Lake Norman Regional Economic Development Corporation. The seven communities that comprise Mecklenburg County play crucial roles as well by providing a high quality range of lifestyles and economic opportunities.

The County has a vision of continuing and enhancing this strong economy by supporting policies for economic growth that:

- Create and sustain national and global competitiveness
- Stimulate business vitality
- Enhance quality of life in communities and neighborhoods

Together, these three qualities will provide sustainability through economic downturns, enhance economic mobility and opportunities for all residents, and support the stable tax base necessary to continue to deliver high quality services.

To reach this vision, Mecklenburg County has developed a framework with five Focus Areas to be supported by the Office of Economic Development (shown left). The Focus Areas represent a mixture of enhancing current activity and engaging in new activities.

Implementation strategies for each of the five Focus Areas will be based upon the following Guiding Principles:

- Collaborative efforts are essential to fostering an economic sustainable community
- Attraction, retention and expansion are equally important
- Increasing opportunities for economic mobility is key to promoting economic justice
- Removing barriers faced by minority, women and small business enterprises and supporting their growth promotes a diverse and balanced economy
- Small businesses and emerging start-ups have an important role in economic growth
- Attractive, inviting and vibrant neighborhoods are fundamental for economic vitality
- Capital investments should be strategic and intentional to enhance quality of life
- Capital investments will be comprehensively evaluated to quantify costs and benefits
- Affordable housing and accessible public transit is needed throughout the County
- Environmental stewardship is critical for economic sustainability
- Workforce development opportunities must align needs of workers and employers
- Arts and culture events are important to creating a quality place for residents and visitors
- Foster a culture that promotes efficiency and excellent customer service.



New & Existing Business Growth

The County has established strong partnerships with several organizations that have resulted in a range of successful economic development projects: from large scale corporate office projects to sophisticated advanced manufacturing projects. Small scale and high-tech corporations help round out the diversity of the Mecklenburg County economy driven by these partnerships. Mecklenburg County will continue and enhance these partnerships while developing new strategic initiatives to remain a leader in economic growth.

Framework Objectives



Attract new investment across a range of industry clusters to ensure a broad and balanced economic base to provide accessible, geographically dispersed employment opportunities for residents and to provide a robust and stable tax base for the County.



Maintain close relationships with key employers in the County to become the “first phone call” when considering growth and expansion and to provide ongoing support for existing industries in Mecklenburg County.



Maintain a collaborative environment with the seven municipalities of Mecklenburg County to leverage the unique assets of each of the seven communities.



Small Business & Entrepreneurial Growth

Small Business

Small businesses, along with minority and women owned enterprises, are the life blood of any vibrant local economy with roughly half of U.S. employees working at a company with 50 employees or less. Helping small businesses form, prosper and grow is a high impact strategy that leverages the creativity and drive of Mecklenburg residents. Mecklenburg County will take a proactive role in ensuring a robust, supportive small, women and minority owned business climate promotes growth across all of the County to provide economic mobility opportunities for all residents.

Entrepreneurial Growth

Nurturing emerging industries and encouraging native high growth companies are crucial for developing a diverse, sustainable local economy. Mecklenburg County is beginning to emerge as hub of innovation and entrepreneurial activity, especially in the energy and payments sectors. UNC-Charlotte's VenturePrise and Charlotte Research Institute, Packard Place, and Queen City Forward in particular have been drivers of entrepreneurial activity. Mecklenburg County has a unique opportunity to be a convening body and clearing house for high growth support.

Framework Objectives

- Develop a robust small business ecosystem in Mecklenburg County by partnering with small business support and resource providers to dismantle barriers faced by minority, women and small business enterprises.
- Support minority, women and small business enterprises through County enterprise wide purchasing and contracting activities and providing support for continued growth.
- Nurture the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Mecklenburg County in partner with high growth support and industry cluster organizations.
- Prepare the next generation of employees and innovators through partnerships between Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, colleges and universities, and emerging sector opportunities.
- Support emerging market entities and high growth enterprises by connecting them with existing industry leaders.



Strong Communities & Neighborhoods

Mecklenburg County is home to a diverse array of communities and neighborhoods, from rural areas with working farms all the way to the vibrant urban lifestyle of uptown Charlotte and from lakefront living to walkable, facility oriented town centers. Communities and neighborhoods that thrive amid the changes in and around them are key to providing a high quality of life and affordable housing and taxes. Mecklenburg County will work collaboratively

with local communities to support quality programming and investment that provide positive long term economic benefits.

Framework Objectives



Continue to provide high quality schools, libraries and park and recreation facilities in all neighborhoods as well as serving communities of need with high quality human services.



Leverage County investments in facilities and assets to help communities and neighborhoods grow and prosper in meaningful ways for future generations and secure their long term stability.



Collaborate where appropriate with communities and neighborhoods as they implement infrastructure and other investments to advance the goals of the Livable Communities Plan.



Evaluate the costs and benefits of proposed capital investment partnerships by using economic modeling tools to help guide decisions.



Encourage corporate stewardship in the private sector to help the County advance the goals of economic mobility and creating opportunity for all residents in Mecklenburg County.



Workforce Development

Mecklenburg County enjoys a robust economy with a diverse range of opportunities for employment from high tech and finance sector positions at one end of the spectrum to light manufacturing and service industry positions serving as gateways to advancement on the other end of the spectrum. The ability of residents to have access to this range of opportunities promotes economic stability and helps families become economically secure. Mecklenburg

County will utilize its existing programs to promote employment opportunity and help residents develop new skills to adapt to a dynamic economy.

Framework Objectives



Partner with existing workforce development programs in the region to link residents to opportunities created by business attraction and retention activities and ensure job training programs are matched to actual job opportunities.



Leverage the significant efforts of County human services agencies to connect clients with workforce development opportunities and to collect real time information on the specific local barriers to economic mobility.



Leverage County purchasing and contracting policies to provide access to employment opportunities for those facing economic mobility challenges.



Tourism, Arts and Culture

Mecklenburg County has become desirable as a convention destination thanks in part to the 2012 Democratic National Convention hosted by the City of Charlotte. Mecklenburg County has made critical investments in attractions such as the Levine Avenue of the Arts, the US National Whitewater Center, Matthews Sportsplex, the Carowinds expansion and the new uptown Charlotte Knights baseball stadium to help drive the growth in the tourism industry. Tourism pro-

vides a strong tax revenue stream while providing a wide range of flexible job opportunities. Mecklenburg County will invest strategically in its own facilities and in partnerships to help expand tourism as well as provide enhanced arts and culture opportunities for residents.

Framework Objectives



Support existing facilities such as parks, recreation centers and greenways through their lifecycle and refreshes to maintain current tourism growth.



Inclusion of new Strategic Initiatives at the recommendation of Economic Development Committee of Board of County Commissioners comprehensive review of Focus Area.

Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners

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Economic Development Partners

Center City Partners
 Central Piedmont Community College
 Charlotte Regional Business Alliance
 Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority
 City of Charlotte
 Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce
 Lake Norman Regional Economic Development Corporation
 NC Department of Commerce
 Town of Cornelius
 Town of Davidson
 Town of Huntersville
 Town of Matthews
 Town of Mint Hill
 University City Partners
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